

166-180

166- The Hanukkah lamp teaches a great Bible lesson. Most Hanukkah lamps have 9 “candles.” But, of those 9 one will always be a bit separated from the others. The reason? That is the *shamash*, the “servant” lamp. Each night of the ritual the *shamash* is the first one lit and it becomes the source for lighting the others. It serves the rest of the lampstand. Pretty cool!

167- Here’s an amazing truth- We have MANY more failures recorded against the life of David than we do of King Saul. But, David is the one that is called “the friend of God.” Brew on that for a while...

168- The definition of “First Born” is not exactly what you may think. If a woman has a girl first she never has a “firstborn.” (Sorry about that.) If a woman has a C-section first and then later has a boy by natural delivery that second boy is actually the “first born” for he has “breached the womb.” I’m not making this up. The Mishnah defines this.

169- When an observant Jew mounts a Mezuzah to the doorpost he does it at a 45-degree angle. If it was straight up and down, too vertical, it’s a sign of not being concerned enough about this world- (“too heavenly minded.”) If it’s only horizontal it is not aching for Heaven enough. 45-degrees signifies a heart for Heaven and hands and feet for this world. Interesting.

170- The Roman empire was about 5.1 million square kilometers. That’s basically the same size as “the lower 48”, the contiguous states here in America. In that window Israel (comparatively) is about the size of east Tennessee, for real! At any given time up to 1/7th of Roman military might was based in Israel. Imagine how upset people would be if the U.S. had to invest 14% of its military budget on keeping east Tennessee from blowing up. No wonder the Senate and Emperor considered Israel a pain in the neck!

171) Hebrews 10:20 says, “The veil which is His flesh.” Powerful stuff! If you allow that to say what it says it tells you that Jesus is the ONLY one in the universe to be “at home” on both sides! He touches/lives on our side and touches/is at home in the Most Holy presence of God at the same time. That’s way above my pay grade!

172) In the “Nativity” story (Luke’s version in chapters 1 & 2) there are several times when humans burst forth in poem or song or prayer or... Mary, Zechariah, Simeon... Have you ever noticed that hardly a line of those utterances were original? They are basically verses of their Scripture being recited! These were very “Scripture saturated” people!

173) Linking to the previous insight (#173) I then challenge you to ask who is Mary quoting when she says, “Be it unto me according to thy word...” if the pattern holds true? I offer you one thought and it should knock your socks off- It feels to me that she is paraphrasing the horrific acceptance of Jephthah’s daughter in Judges 11! Let that sink in!

174) We honor the people of the Bible who responded to God positively. That’s why we know the names of Moses and Abraham and Mary and Paul and... Have you ever wondered if they were the first to be given the chance for such notoriety in each of those stories? Did God approach anyone before Abraham with the offer? Was Mary absolutely God’s first choice? Don’t scoff at the idea for it’s well worth considering the ramifications!

175) The last one (#147) has another tangent. Is there a chance that God could have approached each character that we remember at some time prior to when their story seems to begin in the narrative? Is there a chance that the bush was burning prior to “that” day and Moses just wasn’t ready to turn? That raises questions about my availability AND about my readiness for God’s timing and that’s not a bad thing to chew on.

176) Would you like the book of Daniel if God didn’t bail His friends out at the end of each of the first six chapters? Think about it- each chapter begins with God’s friend/friends in trouble and there’s no guarantee that they will survive the chapter. But we like the stories because they do. How would you feel if chapter 42 wasn’t glued to the end of Job? Are you satisfied with the ending of the story with John the Baptist? These are challenging thoughts.

177) *The Mishnah* is a remarkable resource but it's a lot of heavy wading to get to good stuff that comes flying out at you once in a while. Let me give you a really sweet one- You do know that Jews weren't supposed to bear burdens on the Sabbath but its *Shabbat* tractate (book section) tells us there were certain exceptions allowed. One of those exceptions was for medicine. Now, fasten your seat belt: One of those "allowable-burden" medicines was that which was "the cure for a festering wound." Here it comes. Get ready to have your socks knocked off- The "cure for a festering wound" (that you could carry in your pocket on the Sabbath) was "the nail of one crucified." AMAZING!

178) Have you ever noticed the parallels in the two "banquet" events within the "Passion" segment of His ministry? There's the feast at Simon's house and then "The Last Supper." Curiously, in both feet get washed, that act is scandal and Judas storms out of the room in both scenes. Chew on that!

179) Priest's could not offer blemished sacrifices. "Blemished" priests could not serve in the officiate roles either. Leviticus 21 lists about a dozen disqualifying elements and the *Mishnah* adds a whole bunch more. (That's not surprising.) But, curiously, one of the conditions that the *Mishnah* considered to be a disqualifying condition was being ambidextrous. Really!

180) Carrying on with the thought of #179- This explains why Zechariah had to leave the temple service and go home in Luke 1. A mute priest was a blemished priest. He could not serve again until he got the ability to speak back so we know that he was disengaged from his duties for nearly a year, right?